

# The Pacific Connection

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## VERA/VSIP attracts 35 applicants

Story by Alexander Kufel

**T**he incentive buy-out and early-retirement programs that were offered to Headquarters POD and HED employees at the grade levels of GS-13 and below in an effort to minimize the effects of reorganization drew 40 formal inquiries from interested employees. Of those, 35 met the deadline of submitting the appropriate paperwork by Nov. 14 with 28 people requesting optional retirement, three requesting early retirement under VERA (Voluntary Early Retirement Authority) and four requesting separation from federal employment under VSIP (Voluntary Separation Incentive Program).

The criteria used for determining acceptance involved weighing each application against mission requirements and an aggregate net savings to the organization over a two-year period, said Vernon Kajikawa, chief of POD Human Resources. Consequently, every application was approved, and things will now progress fairly rapidly, with all early retirements required by regulation to be completed by Dec. 30.



Photo by Alexander Kufel

*Vernon Kajikawa, chief of Human Resources, said, "My goal was to make sure people understood the implications of VERA and VSIP. Judging by the types of questions we received, I think we succeeded."*

HED Commander, Lt. Col. Ralph H. Graves, said that the implications of this buyout were that it clearly avoids the need for involuntary separations at a later date. The downside of this action is that the people leaving are the ones with experience.

The whole process went by much more smoothly than the last time POD offered these incentive programs, said Kajikawa. "My goal was to make sure people understood the implications of VERA and VSIP. Judging by the types of questions we received, I think we succeeded," he said.

Kajikawa also said that organizational objectivity had to be maintained throughout the process to ensure the decision was of each person's own making, and he was satisfied that they succeeded with that too.

The projected RIF (reduction-in-force) action will take place in early January and is the procedure required to assign employees to two stand-alone organizations. Thus, RIF letters are anticipated to go out Jan. 7. All RIF actions are expected to be completed by March 15, and the physical

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## Strategic Vision a little hazy but coming into view

**A** clear view of the Corps' Vision is still a long way from being 20-20 in Headquarters POD and HED, if a recent random telephone sampling is any indication.

An informal, albeit non-scientific, survey unearthed the perhaps not-so-startling conclusion that a very small percentage of employees have a firm grasp of the Strategic Vision's three major goals or seven substrategies. About one in seven appear to have knowledge of the Vision's existence and only about one in 20 can

cite the seven substrategies.

"Gee," said one respondent. "I've been working with this so much that it's kind of disheartening to know that most people don't know much about it. Hey, PA, you better get the word out!"

The word is that the Corps' Vision is called "Corps Plus" and it has major goals involving people, mission, and efficiency

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**Competition:** *The underdog in many products can pick and choose where it wants to hit the giant; the giant, by contrast, must defend itself everywhere.*—George H. Lesch, former president, Colgate-Palmolive

## POD commander tours HED

Visitors to Honolulu Engineer District are not particularly rare, but when the caller turns out to be the division commander, with offices on the third floor of the same building, something is afoot. This was noted when Pacific Ocean Division Commander Col. Carl A. Strock made his rounds recently of HED as part of his ongoing division orientation to POD's four districts. Only this time, the district was down the hall rather than across the Pacific as in the case of earlier visits Strock made to Korea, Japan and Alaska. It's all part of the continuing process leading toward a separate division and district here in Honolulu, said HED commander Lt. Col. Ralph H. Graves.

Thus it was during the first week of December that the POD commander made office and site visits that took him to Maui, the Big Island, and around Oahu. He visited virtually every office at Schofield Barracks and Fort Shafter. Depending on one's point of view, said one employee, these are either the final days of a POD/HED operating division or the early days of the restructured separate division and district organization.

As POD and HED grow increasingly closer to becoming stand-alone organizations, this sort of thing will become a frequent event, said Raleigh Sakada, acting-chief of Engineering Services Division.

*(Right) It's "high-tech time" as architect James Pak, ET-TA, demonstrates 3-D modeling to Col. Strock as 1st Lt. David Troutman and Richard Schiavoni, ET-TE, look on.*



*(Above) Col. Carl A. Strock talking shop with surveyors (from left) Richard Abe, Henry Yonamine and Hollis Fletcher.*



*Photos by Jim Dung*  
Structural engineer Roland Chong, ET-TA, says, "This is great! This is the first time I'm meeting the division commander. Because of my job I probably wouldn't meet him otherwise."

## VERA/VSIP...

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separation of Headquarters POD and HED will take place at that time.

Each employee retiring or resigning under these programs was granted a monetary "incentive" at a rate determined by the formula used in calculating severance pay. While there was a ceiling of \$25 thousand per person, the actual amount received was based on the base pay of the individual, the number of years of civilian service, and an adjustment for age. The net payment is dependent upon the individual's tax bracket.